

## FURTHER RECORDS OF *DELIAS LARA* (BOISDUVAL, 1836) (LEPIDOPTERA: PIERIDAE) FROM AUSTRALIA

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### Abstract

New records of *Delias lara* (Boisduval, 1836) from the Torres Strait, northern Queensland, are presented and the species is confirmed as resident within Australian limits on Moa Island.

### Introduction

Davenport and van Mastrigt (2008), in their revision of *Delias mysis* (Fabricius, 1775), designated *Delias mysis onca* (Fruhstorfer, 1910) as a synonym of *Delias lara* (Boisduval, 1836). It is one of four similarly patterned taxa recorded from Australia, including typical *D. mysis mysis* in eastern Queensland, *D. aestiva aestiva* Butler, 1897 in the Northern Territory and *D. aestiva smithersi* Daniels, 2012 from Karumba to Weipa on the Gulf of Carpentaria (Braby 2012, Daniels 2012, Braby 2014).



**Figs 1-4.** *Delias lara* adults from Moa Island, Torres Strait: (1) male upperside; (2) male underside; (3) female upperside; (4) female underside. All in CGM collection.

## Discussion

Within Australian limits, *D. lara* was known previously from only three specimens. One male and one female were collected by the missionary J.W. Schomberg on Moa (= Banks) Island; the specimens are undated but would have been collected between 1921 and 1936, the period in which he was resident on the island (Schomberg 2008). Lachlan (1988) collected a second female, on Dauan Island, in January 1987.

Braby (2012) gave a detailed discussion of the relationship between *Delias aestiva*, *D. mysis* and *D. lara* but, because he saw only the three specimens of *D. lara* mentioned above, he concluded: 'It remains to be established whether the species is established (resident) in the northern and central Torres Strait islands or whether the few specimens represent vagrants that have dispersed south from Papua New Guinea'.

The present authors are aware of eight further specimens of *D. lara* from Australia: 2 ♂♂, 1 ♀, labelled 'Eet Hill, Moa Is., Torres Strait, Qld, 9 July 1977, C.G. Miller' (in C.G. Miller collection); 3 ♂♂, 'Eet Hill vicinity, Moa Is., Torres Strait, Qld, 9-13 July 1977, G. Monteith and D. Cook' (in Queensland Museum, Brisbane); 1 ♂, 'Moa Is, Torres Strait, Qld, 2 July 1993, S.J. Johnson' (in Museum of Tropical Queensland, Townsville); 1 ♀, '09°25'13.00"S 142°32'05.16"E, Mt Cornwallis, Dauan Is, Torres St, Qld, 7-8 Mar 2012, S.J. & I.R. Johnson' (in Museum of Tropical Queensland).

The July 1977 specimens were collected at the head of Neri Creek (10.161°S, 142.300°E), where it enters the rainforest-filled valley between Eet Hill and Banks Peak in the NE sector of Moa Island. This site is in the centre of the island, far from coastal mangroves favoured at other places by the butterfly's close relatives *D. aestiva aestiva* and *D. a. smithersi* (Braby 2012, Daniels 2012). Moa is the largest island (diameter 16 km) in the central Torres Strait and has the highest mountains (up to 350 m altitude) of all Torres Strait islands. The rainforest which covers these mountains and valleys is the most diverse in Torres Strait and benefits from enhanced rainfall generated by the mountains. These factors all combine to give Moa Island a better potential to sustain a resident population of *D. lara* than enjoyed by any other island in Torres Strait.

All six specimens collected in July 1977 were in very fresh condition. Several others were observed flying at the margins of lowland rainforest and settling frequently. The presence of numerous freshly emerged adults indicates that a breeding population is established on Moa Island. Moa is 100 km from the New Guinea mainland so to get a large group of vagrants in good condition would be very unusual. The resident vs vagrant status of the species on Dauan Island, which is very small (1.75 km diameter), is only 10 km from the Papua New Guinea mainland and has little quality rainforest, remains uncertain.

For a general account of Moa Island butterflies see Valentine and Johnson (1993).

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